transport; there is no flat desert, as at Sharjah, suitable for an air-field, and the mountain ranges are too close for safe flying.

In parenthesis, I learnt that shortly after the Sheikh of Sharjah had agreed to lease his land to the British for the purposes of an airfield, he was secretly murdered by a hired assassin, who crept into his palace while he slept, put his eyes out with a red-hot iron, and slit his throat. The present ruler of Sharjah, Sultan bin Saqr, never sleeps without an armed bodyguard outside his room, and it is whispered that he is waiting to avenge the murder of his father. He has little doubt who instigated the crime.

An old retainer of the Khan Sahib's, a wrinkled Arab with a henna-dyed beard, Ali bin Achmed, came to talk to us. He is employed as a seaman and looks after the petrol dhow on which the emergency stocks provided by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company are stored. He is a distinguished-looking old man, with a fund of stories which he related to us as the sun sank slowly behind the sandhills and the palm trees leant in ragged silhouette against the sapphire-tinted horizon.

The Khan Sahib closed the shutters, lighted a perfumed coil of anti-mosquito powder, and hung a kerosene lamp from a hook in the ceiling. A slave brought us dishes of rice, steamed lamb, curry balls, chipatties, *haloua*, fruit and turkish delight, and, feeling ravenous, we ate in silence, seated on Persian rugs with our legs tucked underneath us in Arab style.

After the third cup of clove-scented coffee, we sat in the dim light, smoking cigarettes, while Ali bin Achmed puffed away at his tiny pipeful of hashish. He told us wild stories of shipwrecks on the rocks, and of pirates who plundered the unfortunate vessels and held the passengers to ransom; of British gunboats which shelled the village in reprisal and clapped the headmen in gaol. Then he spoke of the wild men of the mountains, the Shi'hou tribe, who seldom left their dark caves in the hills, and who lived on fish, wild honey and dates. They never mixed with the lowland Arabs, were greatly feared on account of their wild appearance and cruel habits, and were believed to be in league with a djinn.

'There is gold and tin in the mountains,' said Ali, 'but men will not seek for it on account of these wild ones. A man would be rich who dared to climb those cruel slopes and search for the gleaming metal. But, praise be to Allah, it would be a foolhardy enterprise.'

The Shi'hou tribe is a very ancient one, according to Ali, and

like black crows as, without a vestige of matronly shame, they relieve themselves. He who would pursue one of these would be a brave and a needy man, in all conscience.

In Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the women are much fairer in colouring and altogether more civilized by Western standards, especially among the merchant and middle classes: although in Iraq one also finds one of the most primitive peoples in the world, the fierce Marsh Arabs, who live in stilted huts in the middle of a swamp. In Baghdad or Basrah you may find female beauty to vie with Cleopatra's, whilst among the Bedouins I have seen girls of regal countenance and poise. Among the women of the Oman tribes, however, the features are simian rather than Semitic, although here and there one sees a dark-eyed beauty with a smooth copper skin and slim ankles. Their make-up would give Elizabeth Arden a few ideas and probably a heart attack. Belladonna and the dye obtained from a desert shrub is poured into the eyes to make them unnaturally bright and large, and the lashes are painted with a dark blue liquid. Lips and the inside of their hands are also stained with henna or some red dye, and the hair is oiled and screwed tightly back from the head.

Europeans have not infrequently married into Arab families, but the women usually came from Bedouin or northern tribes and were fairly civilized. One old man I know, who originally came from Liverpool, married a Syrian woman and had several fine sons by her. At one time a sailor on the old sailing ships, he went to America for several years, later voyaging to Arabia, where he joined a band of Bedouins and remained with them in the desert for several years. I have heard that he even took part in their expeditions. They accepted him as one of themselves and, burned by the desert sun, he came to look more like an Arab than an Englishman. Eventually he discarded Western life and associations altogether, embraced the Islamic faith, and made the pilgrimage to Mecca. 'Haji' Williamson, now a respectable member of the Bahrain community, is a well-known character in the Gulf.

My duties as Manager were fairly simple ones, requiring more alertness of mind and tact in liaising with my neighbours than concentrated effort. Office routine became a habit, easy to one who had undertaken the duties of adjutant and administrative officer in the R.A.F., and in preparing my correspondence and monthly reports to headquarters I was assisted by an efficient and very